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Mark Lunsford joins Sen. Laura Toy on final push for legislation to protect children

LANSING – State Sen. Laura M. Toy, 6th District, was joined by Mark Lunsford at a news conference Tuesday to support legislation that would help protect children across Michigan from sexual predators.

Lunsford is the father of Jessica Lunsford, a 9-year-old Florida girl who was kidnapped, raped and murdered by a convicted sex offender. Lunsford has since traveled around the country as an advocate for tougher child sex offender laws and joined Toy and other legislators to support a package of bills currently moving through the Michigan Legislature.

“I want Michigan to pass something through because it sends a message to sexual predators ‘Don’t mess with Michigan,’” Lunsford said. “I want Michigan to be one of the first states to pass tough legislation. How do we justify it to our kids that we let these guys out? We need to show our kids how much power we have and protect them.”

Toy’s legislation along with two companion bills would require repeat offenders convicted of criminal sexual conduct in the first degree to serve a life sentence without a chance of parole if their victims were under the age of 13.

“Children are our most vulnerable residents,” said Toy, sponsor of Senate Bill 717. “We need to do everything we can to help protect them.”

The House of Representatives has also been working on Michigan’s version of “Jessica’s Law” which would provide a minimum of 25 years in prison with lifetime parole for anyone 17 years of age or older convicted of sexually assaulting a child under the age of 13.

The House today approved Toy’s bill and companion legislation that must return to the Senate before being presented to the governor.

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Editor’s note: A photo of Sen. Toy and Mark Lunsford is available on the Senate Majority Photowire at: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Toy/Toy.htm>

Audio of Sen. Toy is also available for download on the Senate Majority Audiowire at: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/toy/index.htm>